Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 066810
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R
----------252142Z 111910 /62
R 252041Z MAR 77 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO WHITE HOUSE

S E C R E T STATE 066810

NODIS

FOL RPT DAMASCUS 2004 ACTION SECSTATE 25 MAR 77 QUOTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2004

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, IS, US, PLO, XF
SUBJECT: BILATERAL SYRO-ISRAELI AGREEMENT COULD BE FIRST STAGE EN ROUTE TO GENEVA--IF ONLY SYRIA AGREES

1. SUMMARY:

IT MAY PROVE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN PRESENT DEGREE OF UNITY AMONG ARAB MODERATES IF PREPARATIONS FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE ARE PROLONGED. IF ARABS COULD AGREE THAT WORKING FOR OVERALL AGREEMENT ON ONE FRONT WAS USEFUL COURSE TO PURSUE EN ROUTE GENEVA, SUCH A NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT BE RELATIVELY QUICKLY LAUNCED. AMONG THE SEVERAL POSSIBLE ARAB NEGOTIATORS, SYRIA OFFERS CERTAIN ADVANTAGES. SYRIAN BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WOULD GIVE ASAD A SPECIAL INCENTIVE TO RESHAPE THE PLO INTO A MORE ACCEPTABLE BODY FOR FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS. SOVIETS MIGHT BE ATTRACTED BY PROSPECT OF SUPPORTING SYRIAN NEGOTIATIONS SINCE ITS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 066810

POSITION HERE REMAINS MORE IMPORTANT RELATIVE TO WHAT IT HAS IN EGYPT. WERE ASAD TO ACCEPT TO ENGAGE IN BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS, HOWEVER, IT WOULD ONLY BE WITH THE ACTIVE BACKING OF HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES; WE CANNOT BE CONFIDENT HE EVEN THEN WOULD DO SO. END SUMMARY

2. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE USG SCENARIO FOR THE ARAB-

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS IS THAT WE ARE WORKING TO CONVENE
GENEVA IN THE LATTER HALF OF 1977. ON THE EVE OF MEETINGS
BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE MODERATE ARAB LEADERS,
IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WITH CONFIDENCE HOW LONG IT
WILL TAKE TO RESOLVE OUTSTANDING PROCEDURAL ISSUES BEFORE
GENEVA CAN BE CONVENED. OUR PRELIMINARY READING OF PNC
CONFERENCE RESULTS IS THAT ARAFAT GAVE UP GROUND TO THE
REJECTIONISTS, IN RETURN PERHAPS PRESERVING SOME AREA OF
FREEDOM TO NEGOTIATE TERMS OF PLO PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA.
TIME WILL TELL WHETHER HIS "FREEDOM" PROVES ILLUSORY.
UNLESS THE PLO OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ON ITS OWN OR UNDER
ARAB PRESSURE, DEVELOPS A MORE FLEXIBLE POSTURE TOWARDS
ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, IT MAY BE HARD TO FIND WAY TO
INVITE PLO TO GENEVA. PNC CONFERENCE MAY THUS HAVE CREATED
A FURTHER OBSTACLE TO RECONVENING GENEVA FOR SYRIA,
WHOSE PRESENT STACNE IS THAT IT WILL ATTEND GENEVA WITHOUT
THE PLO ONLY IF THAT ORGANIZATION IS INVITED AND REFUSES
TO ATTEND.

3. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT ONCE THE GOI HAS COMPLETED ITS
MID-MAY ELECTIONS, TENSIONS WILL BUILD UP RATHER QUICKLY
IN THE ARAB RANKS IN EXPECTATION OF SPEEDY PROGRESS IN
THE PEACE PROCESS. THIS IN TURN COULD LEAD TO BREAK-
DOWN OF PRESENT CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN CONFRONTATION STATES
AND SAUDI ARABIA. (THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP FOR ONE IS KEENLY
AWARE OF THE FRAGILITY OF THE PRESENT DEGREE OF ARAB UNITY.
FONMIN KHADDAM TOLD A RECENT VISITOR THAT BY THE FRACE OF
GOD, JANUARY'S RIOTS HAD BROKEN OUT IN EGYPT RATHER THAN
SYRIA.) IF THE RELATIVELY UNITED FRONT PREVAILING TODAY
SECRET

SECRET

SPLITS, THIS COULD EITHER PARALYZE THE PEACE PROCESS OR
PROMPT SADAT ONCE AGAIN TO GET OUT IN FRONT SEEKING
A FURTHER SETTLEMENT FOR EGYPT. STAGNATION WILL NOT ONLY
THREATEN INTER-RAB COORDINATION BUT ALSO THE UNACKNOWLEDGED
BUT REAL PERCEPTION OF A PARTIAL CONVERGENCE OF SYRO-ISRAELI
INTERESTS FORGED BY THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON LAST
YEAR.

4. WE SUBMIT THERE MAY BE WAY BOT TO TAKE QUICKER ADVANTAGE
OF PRESENT MOOD OF ARAB MODERATES TO COORDINATE CLOSELY
WITH ONE ANOTHER BESIDES PREPARING TO MOVE DIRECTLY TT
GENEVA AND STILL NOT FORECLOSE ITS EVENTUAL OPENING.
THIS WOULD BE TO WORK FOR ACHIEVING AN OVER-
ALL AGREEMENT ON ONE FRONT. IN CONSIDERING THIS ALTERNATIVE,
DAMASCUS COULD WELL BE THE BEST PROSPECT FOR AN ISRAELI
NEGOTIATING PARTNER RATHER THAN THE PERHAPS SUPERFICIALLY
EASIER CHOCIES OF EITHER EGYPT OR JORDAN. SHOULD EGYPT
BREAK RANKS AND AGAIN MOVE INTO UNILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS,
THIS WOULD PREDICTABLY LEAD TO REPETITION OF THE RECRIMINA-

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

TIONS WHICH SURROUNDED SINAI II AND DISRUPT FUTURE SETTLE-
MENT EFFORTS. FOR ITS PART, JORDAN APPEARS TO BE FROZEN
IN ITS SELF-PROTECTING COMMITMENT TO THE RABAT PRINCIPLE
THAT SINCE THE PLO IS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
PALESTINIANS, AMMAN WILL NOT NEGOTIATE STATUS OF THE WEST
BANK UNLESS (AND PERHAPS EVEN IF) REQUESTED TO DO SO BY
THE PRINCIPAL ARAB STATES.

5. WE CANNOT ASSERT THAT ASAD WOULD ACCEPT TO ENTER UNI-
LATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. WERE HE TO DO SO, IT WOULD ONLY BE
IF HE HAD ACTIVE EGYPTIAN, SAUDI AND JORDANIAN BACKING AND
AT LEAST PLO ACQUIESCENCE. EVEN THEN, IT WOULD NOT BE EASY
TO CONVINCE ASAD TO ENGAGE. HE IS NOT AS HARD PRESSED FOR
A BREAKTHROUGH AS SADAT AND MIGHT WELL CONSIDER THE APPROACH
TOO RISKY FOR SYRIA. (FOR ALL THE COMMENTS BY TTHE SYRIAN
LEADERSHIP DOWNPLAYING THE EFFECT OF CRITICISM OF SYRIA BY BAGHDAD,
FOR EXAMPLE, THEIR SENSITIVITY TO IRAQI ATTACKS ILLUSTRATES
SECRET

SECRET

THEIR SENSE OF VULNERABILITY.) IF THE ARABS AGREED TO
BACK A SYRO-ISRAELI NEGOTIATION, HOWEVER, IT COULD HAVE
THREE PRINCIPLE ADVANTAGES. FIRST, THE ARAB MODERATE
LEADERS HAVE THE MOST SYMPATHETIC AUDIENCE IN U.S. PUBLIC
AND CONGRESSIIONAL OPINION AND WOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY A ROLE
WITHIN THE U.S. SUPPORTIVE OF THE ISRAELI-SYRIAN NEGOTIATIONS.
IN TURN, THE ARAB LEADERS COULD BE SURE THAT IN ASAD THEY WOULD
BE SUPPORTING A NEGOTIATOR WHO WOULD BE HIGHLY
UNEASY AT BEING OUT IN FRONT. THEY COULD BE CONFIDENT
HE WOULD APPLY MAXIMUM PRESSURE ON THE PALESTINIANS,
AIMED EITHER AT GETTING THEM TO MODIFY THEIR DEMANDS OR TO
STAND ASIDE AND LET ISSUES INVOLVING EGYPT AND JORDAN BE
TACKLED FIRST. THIRDLY, IF AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA COULD BE
OBTAINED, AGREEMENT WITH OTHER ARAB PARRTIES SHOULD
BE FACILITATED.

6. ISRAEL:

WE ASSUME ANY FORESEEABLE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WILL PREFER
BILATERAL TO MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. GAD YAACOBI'S
PREDICTION THAT ATTEMPT AT ANY OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SETTLE-
MENT WILL FAIL AND BE SUCCEEDED BY A RETURN TO STEP-BY-
STEP DIPLOMACY SEEMS WIDELY SHARED IN SIRAEL. (TEL AVIV
2022). A SYRO-ISRAELI AGREEMENT WOULD COVER ONLY ONE
FRONT BUT THE PRINCIPLES IT ESTABLISHED WOULD BE APPLICABLE
TO ALL. SOME AMBIQUITY IN DESCRIBING THE GOAD OF SUCH A
NEGOTIATION MIGHT BE PRACTICED. SYRIA WOULD LIKELY ARGUE
THAT AN AGREEMENT IT REACHED WITH ISRAEL WOULD ESTABLISH
GENERAL PRINCIPLES; ISRAELI MIGHT AFFIRM THAT FUTURE
NEGOTIATIONS OVER SINAI AND WEST BANK WOULD NOT BE PREJUDGED

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

BY AN AGREEMENT ON GOLAND.

7. SOVIETS:

MOSCOW RETAINS A RELATIVELY MORE IMPORTANT FOOTHOLD IN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 066810

SYRIA THAN IT DOES IN EGYPT AND CERTAINLY IN JORDAN. IF
MOSCOW'S BASIC CONCERN IS HAVING A ROLE TO PLAY AND NOT
NECESSARILY PLAYING IT IN GENEVA, IT MIGHT FIND ATTRACTIVE
THE PROSPECT OF SUPPORTING ITS "BEST FRIEND" AMONG THE
CONFRONTATION STATES IN AN OVERALL SYRO-ISRAELI AGREEMENT.
SOVIET SUPPORT COULD BE USEFUL IN CONTAINING RADICAL
ARAB CRITICISM OF SYRIA.

8. SHOULD DEPARTMENT FIND MERIT IN THIS APPROACH, QUESTION
ARISES AS TO WHEN IT SHOULD BE BROACHED TO THE VARIOUS
ARAB LEADERS. IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ASKE EACH ARAB
LEADER DURING THEIR MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER THE
NON-SPECIFIC QUESTION WHTERH SEEKING AN OVERALL AGREEMENT
ON ONE FRONT WOULD BE A POSSIBLE WAY TO PROCEED TO GENEVA,
GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, WITHOUT
INDICATING WE HAD ANY ONE ARAB STATE IN MIND. ALTERNATIVELY,
IT MAY BE PREFERABLE TO DEFER EVEN THIS GENERAL QUESTION
UNTIL AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS AND OUR NEXT ROUND OF
TOP LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE ARAB STATES.

9. IN SUM, THE APPEAL TO US OF A SYRO-SIRAELI NEGOTIATION
IS THAT IF ALL CONCERNED VIEW IT AS LESS OF A RISK THAM
A POSSIBLY PROLONGED PROCEDURAL WRANGLE, IT COULD HELP
THE PARTIES STAY ON COURSE DURING A PERIOD OF PREDICTABLE
FRUSTRATION AS ARRANGEMENTS FOR GENEVA ARE WORKED OUT. WE
RECOGNIZE THERE IS GRAVE RISK INVOLVED IN THIS PROPOSAL;
IT COULD PREJUDICE CONVENING A COMPREHESIVE CONFERENCE
BY STIMULATING ARAB SUSPICIONS. IF ASAD WERE AGREEABLE,
HOWEVER, IT WOULD ENGAGE THE HERETOFORE MOST UNBENDING
CONFRONTATION STATE, SYRIA, AND CREATE A DYNAMIC WHICH WOULD
STIMULATE IT TO PUSH FOR FURTHER PROGRESS AFTER ITS OWN
BILATERAL NEGOTIATION. IT WOULD BE CONSONANT WITH THE
APPARENT TREND IN ISRAELI THINKING AND POSSIBLY ATTRACT
USEFUL SOVIET SUPPORT. FINALLY, IT COULD PROVIDE A REASTNABLE
JUSTIFICATION TO SET ASIDE THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN
PARTICIPATION AND SIMULTANEOUSLY FOCUS ARAB ENERGIES
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 066810

ON RESHAPING THE PLO.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

MUPRHY

UNQUOTE VANCE

SECRET

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PALESTINIANS, CAT-B, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE066810
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: N770002-0180
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770320/aaaaarkn.tel
Line Count: 227
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3329d0b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2993121
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BILATERAL SYRO-ISRAELI AGREEMENT COULD BE FIRST STAGE EN ROUTE TO GENEVA--IF ONLY SYRIA AGREES
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, XF, SY, PLO
To: WHITE HOUSE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3329d0b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009